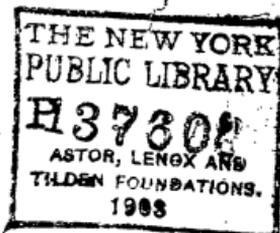


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THE CLERGY

AND

THE CONQUEST OF THE PHILIPPINES.

[From the Oakland Enquirer, April 25, 1899.]

EDITOR ENQUIRER:—

The Palm Sunday sermon of Rev. Charles R. Brown of the First Congregational Church of this city has been printed in pamphlet form by Mr. Valentine for general circulation. It is such a timely contribution to the discussion of the most important question before the American people since the settlement of the question of African slavery that I take the liberty of calling the attention of your readers to it.

On Palm Sunday Mr. Brown read from one of the Gospels the account of Christ's entry into Jerusalem riding upon the humblest of the beasts of burden, and then, in the sermon, he contrasted this entry of the Prince of Peace into the City of Zion with the procession of Imperialism, with its legions of soldiers, led by generals riding upon their splendid war chargers, while the populace shout themselves hoarse in loud acclaim. He then made his hearers realize that this modern triumph of force is trampling under foot the bodies of men, women, and children, who, though dark of skin, humble of attainments, and without the blessings of the Protestant religion, are yet human beings created by the Father of

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all, and endowed by Him with the right to life, liberty and happiness.

Mr. Editor, as an American citizen, and a well-wisher of the Church, I am delighted that there are some ministers of the Gospel of Peace who see, and have the courage to point out, that Christ taught certain general truths inherent in the very constitution of things, that are utterly at variance with all notions of conquest and of depriving others, however humble or degraded, of that which is theirs.

Oakland has two clergymen at least who have lifted up their voices in protest against the wickedness of propagating the Gospel, or adding to the domain of our Republic, by invading a foreign land and killing those of its inhabitants who resist. The salt has not lost all its savor. But when we see the majority of our Protestant Christian ministers coming to the front as the loudest advocates of conquest by arms of the Filipinos, is it not a wonder the Church has lost so much of its hold upon the people? The voice of these ministerial non-combatants is for a war of conquest. They know not what they do.

I served from the beginning to the end of our four years' war, and wish these men could see a little of what my eyes have seen, or what our soldiers in the Philippines are now seeing. War is hell, hell so deep and damnable that every thinking man should protest against it as a means of spreading the Gospel or enlarging trade. It is a most accursed engine for the moral ruin of the conqueror, and the moral and physical ruin of the conquered.

No violation of the truths taught by the Master, can go unpunished. The reason is, because they are truths of the very fabric of human relations. "Do unto others as you would have them do unto you," "Love your neighbor as yourself." You must not kill, nor rob, nor steal, nor even covet your neighbor's goods. These are principles at the very foundation of things. How can these principles accord with our treatment of the Filipinos? He who by any sophistry, or by calling attention to the advantage to be obtained, induces the doing anything in violation of these basic principles, makes a dreadful mistake. It reacts on himself and upon those whom he has persuaded. The punishment is sure to be in proportion to the extent or magnitude of the violation of these all-pervasive principles.

When will the American people have fully atoned for the sin of slavery? The war which crushed it ended more than thirty years ago, but we are still suffering from it. I am old enough to remember the time when African slavery in this country was viewed either with indifference or approval by ninety-nine out of a hundred of our population. I remember when its opponents were few in numbers and were the detestation of the great body of the American people. As they lifted up their voices in protest against the institution inherited from their ancestors and woven into our social and political relations, how the mob denounced them; how clearly statesmen showed that the views of these abolitionists were subversive of government, and that stark ruin would follow such unseasonable agitation; how business

men, with special bitterness, declared they ought to be suppressed as common enemies; and how professors in colleges and political economists philosophically disposed of their arguments!

I remember well the stand taken by the clergy and the Church generally. There was no sophistry that so effectually hindered the growth of sentiment against slavery, especially among business men, as that put forth by men from professedly Christian pulpits. There were, undoubtedly, cranks among the abolitionists who made themselves and their views obnoxious to many. But there were among them enough, to at least rouse attention, of noble, clear-headed men and women, who believed that the truths taught by Jesus were eternal, all-pervasive, and as applicable to the affairs of men in the nineteenth century as when they were first uttered. No logic of the school men, no argument of the statesmen, no expounding of Scripture by the clergy, no denunciation by business men, could silence their protest against our people taking from another their liberty or their property. And what was the result? Who prevailed finally? But, though slavery was crushed, we are still paying for the sins of our fathers.

This generation will not see the end of the troubles incurred by our unwarranted conquest of the Philippines. If we violate the all-pervasive principle that justice must be done to all, white or black, or that an aggregation of men, or a nation any more than an individual, cannot take away from another life, or liberty, or property, except as a penalty for crime, the offender must suffer as

well as the victim. There is no difference in principle between killing or robbing a Filipino or a negro and the killing or robbing of a white man. In either case, it is a crime. The black or brown man has just as much right to his country and to its political control as we have to ours. His country can no more be bought or sold without his consent than can ours without our consent. When a strong, enlightened nation conquers a weak and ignorant one in order to propagate the religion, or to enlarge the trade of the stronger, a colossal crime is committed.

I am so much reminded by the arguments made in support of our conduct in the East of the arguments heard in my youth in support of slavery, advanced especially by clergymen and business men, that I feel sure of seeing the same results when the awakening comes,—and the awakening will come.

General Shafter recognizes that the Filipinos are making a vigorous fight for their freedom, but he says we must go ahead, though "it may be necessary to kill half the population of the islands in order that the remaining half may be lifted from their semi barbarity to the civilization we are ready to give them."

I have not before heard of any responsible person making a statement of the expansionist's theory with such brutal frankness, but there is no substantial difference in principle between General Shafter's statement of the proper thing for the American people to do and the deliverances of many popular ministers. The *Bulletin* the other day printed a portion of a paper read by a

most excellent and distinguished Oakland minister before the Presbyterian Ministerial Association, and I am told that a large majority of the ministers present were in hearty accord with the views expressed. The reverend gentleman does not state in express terms his belief in the propriety of butchering fifty per cent. of the Filipinos if necessary in order to control the remainder, but his arguments lead to the same conclusion. He assumes we have the right to take possession of these people and their country in order to expand our trade and lift them into a higher civilization. He says: "I believe the retention of the Philippines is our duty, at least until they acquire the ability to govern themselves." Who gave us the right to take possession of them, and by what right, having obtained possession, do we still retain it against their will? We have captured their principal city by force, and now we must conquer the remainder of their country in order to retain possession.

How does he know they cannot govern themselves now? My neighbor may be making wretched use of his property, or of his political freedom, but shall I deprive him of either? Who made me his judge? Shall one people judge another, and because the stronger and the more enlightened are of opinion that the weaker and the more ignorant cannot properly govern themselves step in and arrogate that right?

He says the interests of trade require we should have these islands. But the people of these islands object, and we cannot obtain them without slaughtering a large portion of the inhabitants, burning their homes, and

turning these islands into a hell; but yet he says he is in favor of taking and keeping them, because "immense markets in the East mean help and comfort and better living for our toiling millions at home." The highwayman justifies himself by the same plea. Shall a civilized people defend its aggressions upon the liberty of another because of the advantage to be obtained by doing so? Has it become necessary, in order to feed our toiling millions at home, that we take forcible possession of the Philippine Islands, and as their inhabitants resist, kill them off? Is that Christianity? No, a thousand times, no. There is nothing to be found in anything that Christ said or did justifying any such conduct on our part.

One of the most eminent of our professors at the State University joins with a majority of the ministers in supporting our war of conquest. But his well-trained, logical mind sees that this is in conflict with the basic principle upon which this republic rests, and also in conflict with the Golden Rule. Hence he declares, in discussing this subject, that the proposition that governments derive their just powers from the consent of the governed is not true, and that the same rules of morality do not apply to a nation that apply to individuals.

He sees clearly that our conduct towards the Filipinos is utterly indefensible, if he concedes the premises supposed to be at the foundation of our political institutions, and the basis of proper relations between individual men. Therefore, as a trained logician, he repudiates the premises. That is bad enough, Heaven knows, but no

mischief is done by such teaching, for when a matter is put so plainly, the average normal man or woman revolts at once. But when ministers of the Gospel who have the confidence of their congregations declare the hand of Providence is leading the way to spread the blessings of Christianity and increase our trade, the consciences of their hearers are dulled, and the mischief is incalculable.

Do you suppose, Mr. Editor, that if the clergy of our country had, for the last year, expounded from the pulpit that the teachings of the Master they follow should be applied to the treatment by our nation of the Filipinos, there would have been a war with that unhappy people, with its accompaniment of "shooting them like rabbits," and the burning of their humble homes? It is not too late to undo, in part, the wrong that has been done, and let us hope that the remonstrances that have been so well expressed by a Sunderland and a Brown of the Oakland ministry will be listened to. Of one thing we may be sure, and that is, that if the passion of greed and conquest prevails, it will only be for a time. *It is a question of morals* that is involved, and sooner or later, justice and right will prevail with our people. The most of us will live to see the American people bitterly repenting the violations, during the last year, of the basic principles of human society.

WARREN OLNEY.

April 24, 1899.